

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSC-10 PA-04

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SAJ-01 DRC-01 /118 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1264

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDD*

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0400

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR IS

SUBJ: KNESSET APPROVES DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

REF: TEL AVIV 330

1. SUMMARY: KNESSET ON JANUARY 22 APPROVED GOI
ADHERENCE TO DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT 76-35, WITH ONLY
RIGHTWING OPPOSITION BLOC LIKUD VOTING AGAINST IT. VOTE
WAS PRECEDED BY EIGHT HOUR DEBATE OVER MERITS OF AGREEMENT,
WITH LABOR LEADERSHIP ARGUING THAT IT WAS ONLY ALTERNATIVE
TO RENEWED WAR WHILE OPPOSITION CLAIMING THAT GOI HAD
RENEGED ON ITS EARLIER POSITIONS AND GIVEN UP BEST BARGAINING
CARDS IN EXCHANGE FOR SECOND-RATE MILITARY STRATEGIC LINE.
END SUMMARY.

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2. AFTER EIGHT HOUR DEBATE, KNESSET JAN 22 APPROVED CABINET

STATEMENT ON DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, 76-35. ONLY OPPOSITION VOTES WERE CAST BY LIKUD (FOUR MEMBERS WERE ABSENT). THERE WERE NO ABSTENTIONS. GOVERNMENT MOTION WAS SUPPORTED BY LABOR ALIGNMENT, NRP, ILP, AGUDA, CITIZENS RIGHTS, MOKED, RAKAH AND TWO ARAB LISTS. SPEECHES SUPPORTING DISENGAGEMENT GENERALLY STRESSED THAT ISRAEL HAD NO BETTER ALTERNATIVE, WITH NEW AGREEMENT NOT POSING UNACCEPTABLE SECURITY RISKS. LIKUD LEADERSHIP REITERATED CHARGES THAT DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT VIOLATED PREVIOUS CONDITIONS OF GOVERNMENT FOR TROOP WITHDRAWALS AND CONSTITUTED SECURITY RISK.

3. FOLLOWING STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER (REPORTED TEL AVIV 354), LIKUD LEADER MENACHEM BEGIN BITTERLY ATTACKED DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT REITERATING CHARGES HE MADE OVER PAST WEEK. HE TERMED DISENGAGEMENT A "UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL DURING PERIOD OF WAR." WHILE CONCEDED THAT AGREEMENT CALLED FOR " THINNING OUT OF FORCES," AT STAKE WAS ISSUE OF PRINCIPLE--THAT NOT SINGLE EGYPTIAN SOLDIER SHOULD BE ALLOWED ACROSS CANAL IN ABSENCE OF PEACE.

4. BEGIN SPECIFICALLY CRITICIZED MINISTERS ALLON, DAYAN AND EBAN FOR THEIR ROLES IN NEGOTIATING AGREEMENT. HE CHARGED DAYAN WITH MISLEADING NATION BY SAYING THAT EGYPT SOUGHT PEACE, OR AT LEAST END OF CONFRONTATION. BEGIN NOTED STATEMENT OF EGYPT'S ARAB SOCIALIST UNION PARTY THAT ARAB AIM STILL IS LIBERATION OF ALL THE OCCUPIED AREAS AND RESTORATION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS.

5. CONTINUING LIKUD ATTACK, FORMER GENERAL ARIK SHARON CHARGED THAT ISRAEL FAILED TO DERIVE FULL POLITICAL OR MILITARY BENEFIT FROM ITS PRESENCE ON WESTERN BANK OF CANAL. HE CLAIMED THAT EGYPT IN OCT 6 ATTACK SOUGHT ONLY TO SEIZE LINE OF LOW HILLS SOME 10 KM EAST OF CANAL, AND CHALLENGED THE GOVERNMENT'S CLAIM THAT MITLA AND JIDI PASSES FORM DEFENSIBLE LINES. OPENING OF CANAL COULD CONSTITUTE MILITARY DANGER TO ISRAEL AND WOULD NOT DETER EGYPTIANS FROM LAUNCHING NEW WAR. NEW LINES RESULTING FROM DISENGAGEMENT WOULD REQUIRE STATIONING OF VERY LARGE RESERVE FORCES.

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6. DEFMIN DAYAN IN RESPONDING TO LIKUD CHARGES SAID HE BELIEVED EGYPT NOW INTENDED PEACE-- OR AT LEAST RESTORATION OF PEACEFUL LIKE IN CANAL ZONE. NEW DEFENSE LINES, THOUGH NOT AS GOOD AS CANAL, ARE ADEQUATE TO MAINTAIN ISRAEL'S VITAL SECURITY NEEDS. DAYAN REJECTED AS UNTENABLE TO OPTION THAT IDF REFUSE TO WITHDRAW UNTIL FULL PEACE COMES. PRESENT AGREEMENT WAS BEST THAT COULD BE ACHIEVED. *AYING IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO DETAIL MILITARY ASPECTS OF AGREEMENT FROM KNESSET

ROSTRUM, DAYAN POINTED OUT THAT OPENING OF CANAL TO SHIPPING AND REHABILITATION OF CIVILIAN LIFE ALONG CANAL WERE FACTORS WHICH TENDED TO REDUCE MILITARY THREAT.

7. FON MIN EBAN MADE POINT THAT THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY OF ISRAEL STAYING ON WEST BANK OF CANAL WITHOUT NEW OUTBREAK OF WAR BEING HIGHLY PROBABLE. DISENGAGEMENT, HE BELIEVED, CLEARLY REDUCED EGYPT'S OFFENSIVE CAPACTIY.

8. NRP LEADER YITZHAK RAFAEL STATED THAT POSITIVE ASPECTS OF DISENGAGEMENT OUT WEIGHTED NEGATIVE ASPECTS, AND CHARGED LIKUD WITH EXAGGERATING RISKS. HE BELIEVED ISRAEL FACED PROSPECT OF WAR IF IT STAYED ON WEST BANK OF CANAL. RAFAEL NOTED HOWEVER THAT THE COUNTRY DID NOT NEED DISENGAGEMENT WITH JORDAN, AND WARNED THAT JORDAN RIVER MUST REMAIN AS SECURITY BORDER.

9. COMMENT: KNESSET DEBATE, LESS STORMY THAN ANTICIPATED, GENERALLY ADHERED TO ARGUMENTS OF MAJOR POLITICAL LEADERS DURING PREVIOUS WEEK. ALIGNMENT'S MAIN THRUST WAS TO ASSURE PUBLIC THAT DISENGAGEMENT WAS ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO RENEWED FIGHTING, THAT ISRAEL'S SECURITY WAS NOT ENDANGERED BY WITHDRAWAL, AND PROSPECT FOR PEACE ENHANCED. WE BELIEVE ISRAELI PUBLIC, WHILE STILL APPREHENSIVE OF FUTURE, APPEARS TENTATIVELY TO ACCEPT THESE ASSESSMENTS. EMOTIONAL AND EXAGGERATED CHARGES OF LIKUD HAVE TENDED TO DIMINISH THEIR IMPACT, ALTHOUGH THEY TOUCH ON WIDELY-BASED ISRAELI CONCERN THAT ARABS DO NOT DESIRE PEACE WITH ISRAEL.

10. IN SECURING SUPPORT OF ALL PARTIES EXCEPT LIKUD, GOVERNMENT AT LEAST FOR IMMEDIATE FUTURE SEEMS IN STRONGER POSITION TO CONTINUE PEACE TALKS. EVOLUTIONOF ISRAELI VIEWS ON EGYPTIAN INTENT WILL BE INFLUENCED, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, BY WHAT HAPPENS DURING AND AFTER IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENT. ACID TEST WILL
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BE WHETHER EGYPT HONORS THE AGREEMENT OR NOT.
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